

Frank McMahon Loses Fight for Life

Chief Investigator
Dies at Age 48

St. Petersburg Times Photo



Frank J. McMahon, 48, chief investigator for The Humane Society of the United States, died on July 1 after suffering a series of strokes over the past 6 months.

Mr. McMahon had been a driving force in HSUS investigative activities from 1961 until last December. He was best known for his investigations of dog dealers, research laboratories, and inhumane transportation of animals. His work took him to rodeo arenas, slaughterhouses, stockyards, cockfights, dog fights, animal auctions, and the Pribilof Islands seal clubbing.

Rodeo promoters, dog fight enthusiasts, and other persons who earn their living by exploiting animals could spot his face in a crowd and had their followers constantly on the alert for his presence. He had been shot at, threatened with personal harm, and his home in Washington's Foggy Bottom section had been bugged.

One of the many headlines describing McMahon's activities labeled him a "tough guy." And he was tough. Once, when the Dept. of Agriculture (USDA) wouldn't allow a cargo of African animals destined for American zoos to dock in New York, he told USDA officials that he would see to it that the animals were humanely destroyed unless they were unloaded. The officials relented, and the ship was cleared to enter the harbor. When it arrived alongside the dock, there was Frank McMahon standing on the bridge. He had convinced the captain of a small boat to take him alongside the ship at 3 a.m. when the ship was still outside the 3-mile limit.

But McMahon was no tough guy in dealing with fellow humanitarians. Humane leaders throughout the nation remember him as the man from Washington who came to help them put an end to local cruelties.

One of McMahon's best known accomplishments was a 1966 raid on a Maryland dog dealer, in which he was accompanied by writers and photographers for Life magazine. The atrocities McMahon uncovered at the site were featured in an article headlined "Concentration Camp for Dogs," which resulted in more than 80,000 letters to Congress. In subsequent congressional hearings, McMahon played a key role in the passage of the Animal Welfare Act of 1966, which required the humane treatment and care of animals destined for and being used in research laboratories.

"Frank McMahon was one of the most valuable assets HSUS had for fighting cruelty," said HSUS President John A.



Life Photo by Stan Wayman

Millions of Life magazine readers followed Frank McMahon's raid of a Maryland dog dealer in a 1966 article entitled "Concentration Camp for Dogs." In the photo at left, McMahon testified before Pinellas County, Fla., commissioners in support of a county spay and neuter clinic in 1973.

Hoyt after learning of McMahon's death. "There is no doubt that he helped make this nation more humane. He was courageous beyond the point of caution when fighting for the cause of animals. All of us who knew and worked with him will miss his indomitable spirit and his unceasing compassion toward his fellow creatures."

Mr. McMahon is survived by his mother, Mrs. Victoria Middleton of Lynn, Mass., and a sister, Mrs. Maryan Rudzinsky of Winthrop, Mass. The family requests that expressions of sympathy be in the form of contributions to the Frank J. McMahon Memorial Fund established by HSUS to support prevention of cruelty to animals.

